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SLOT MACHINE WITH MECHANICAL BONUS INDICATOR

The present invention is directed to a novel slot machine and, more particularly, to a slot machine which comprises a visible, mechanical bonus indicator.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Games of chance have been enjoyed by people for thousands of years and have enjoyed widespread popularity in recent times. Many people enjoy playing a wide variety of games that they have not played before. Playing new games adds to the excitement of this recreational activity.

One popular game of chance that has long been enjoyed by many players is the slot machine. Conventionally, a slot machine is configured for a player to input a standard denomination of currency and then to permit the player to activate a lever or push a button which causes a plurality of reels to spin and ultimately stop to display a random combination of some form of indicia, for example, numbers or symbols. If this display contains one of a preselected plurality of winning combinations, the machine releases money into a payout chute or onto a credit meter for the player. For example, if a player initially wagered two coins of a

national currency and that player won a high payout, that player may receive fifty coins of the same denomination in return.

5 As a safeguard against tampering with machines and
in order to keep some order in a gaming establishment such as
a casino, it has also been suggested that when a player wins
a large jackpot at a slot machine, instead of receiving a very
large number of coins from the machine, the machine prints out
a check or a ticket to the player which is redeemable at a
10 cashier window at that casino. While this method of making
relatively large payments offers some advantages, it also
suffers several disadvantages. One distinct disadvantage is
that this method of payment deprives the player of the
immediate gratification of collecting the winnings. Secondly,
15 the player must leave the machine in order to collect the
winnings. Those familiar with the gaming industry will
appreciate that it is in the gaming establishment's best
interest to allow a player to play continuously at a gaming
device without interruption since the overall profit to the
20 gaming establishment is proportional to the amount of play
that such gaming devices receive. If a player is required to
leave a specific slot machine in order to collect a payout at
another location, the player may not return to play the game.

Since it is desirable to offer players games which they have not played before, it would be desirable to provide a player with additional opportunities to receive winning payouts.

5 It is also highly desirable to provide players with opportunities to win increased payouts.

Those familiar with games involving winning payouts, such as the popular television games entitled "WHEEL OF FORTUNE™" will realize that as players and observers watch a
10 large wheel spin and gradually come to rest, the players experience a heightened feeling of anticipation and excitement as the wheel is slowing down.

It would therefore also be desirable to provide a mechanical payout indicator which can be visually observed by
15 a player and/or other observers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The various embodiments of the present invention comprise slot machines having rotatable reels and a visible, mechanical bonus payout indicator. The bonus payout indicator
20 is clearly visible by the player and is only operable when the primary reels of the slot machine stop on certain predetermined indicia. According to one preferred embodiment

of the present invention, the bonus indicator is in the form of a bonus wheel comprising a disc with protruding pegs and a clapper which strikes the peg as the wheel rotates. When the wheel stops, the clapper points to the bonus payout received
5 by the player.

According to one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the mechanical bonus payout indicator is electro-mechanically operated and connected to a servo motor linked to random generator which determines where the bonus indicator
10 actually stops.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present invention, when the primary reels stop on one of a predetermined plurality of winning indicia sets, a bonus actuator is placed in an active state. According to this
15 embodiment, a person, such as the player, must actuate the actuator in order to operate the bonus indicator.

According to another embodiment of the present invention, the bonus actuator requires operator intervention so that a player must involve a casino attendant who can
20 activate the bonus indicator.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the mechanical indicator is connected to an

electro-mechanical servo motor which gradually reduces the rate of spin of the bonus wheel before the bonus wheel stops.

These and other embodiments are described below in connection with the figure.

5 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

The figure illustrates one slot machine embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

10 The various embodiments of the present invention are designed to provide added excitement to a slot machine in order to increase the enjoyment to players and to serve as an added attraction to potential players. One preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in the Figure wherein a slot machine comprises three spinning reels
15 10, each of which comprise a plurality of indicia. In a manner known in the art, the slot machine comprises a mechanical lever 12, coin slot 14, currency validator 16 and a credit card validator 18. In a manner which will be recognized by those skilled in the art, each reel 10 is
20 designed to rotate and then stop in order to visually display ~~50000~~ at least one, and preferably a number of indicia. If the collection of indicia displayed by the three reels is one of a predetermined plurality of winning indicia sets, then the

player will be provided with a winning payout either through coin chute 20 which deposits winnings into a coin trough 30 or by increasing the player's credits in a credit window 40.

According to a preferred aspect of the present invention, when the reels 10 display a particular indicia set, or one of a predetermined plurality of indicia sets, then the player is provided with an opportunity for a bonus. According to the illustrated embodiment of the present invention, a bonus actuator button 50 is placed in an operative state when reels 10 display a bonus indicia set. A player must then depress bonus actuator 50 in order to start bonus indicator 70 spinning. In the illustrated embodiment, bonus indicator 70 is in the form of a rotating disc comprising pegs 72 and a clapper 74. The facing surface of bonus indicator 70 comprises four distinct areas bearing indicia of the bonus payout to the player. In the illustrated embodiment, the bonus indicator has areas indicating bonuses of \$25.00, \$50.00, \$100.00, and \$2,000.00. When bonus indicator 70 stops, clapper 74 will come to rest in the area on the bonus wheel corresponding to the amounts of the bonus provided to the player.

In a manner which will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, bonus indicator 70 can be operatively linked to a "payout" mechanism which provides a bonus payout

to a player through currency chute 20 or by increasing the amount of winnings shown in credit window 40.

Those familiar with gaming and game shows, will appreciate that players and observers typically experience a heightened level of anticipation and excitement as they observe one or more moving objects approaching a winning position. It is therefore important to the present invention that the bonus indicator be clearly visible to the player.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the bonus indicator is connected to a electro-mechanical control unit, for example, a servo motor, which gradually slows the rotation of the bonus indicator before the bonus indicator stops. According to this embodiment of the present invention, players can be provided with a realistic sense of a totally mechanical indicator. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that such a control unit can also readily be connected to a random generator which will randomly select the winning payout according to a predetermined weighted average for each individual bonus payout, and then cause the servo motor to stop at the desired area on the bonus indicator.

According to another embodiment of the present invention, when reels 10 stop at an indicia set which will

provide a bonus, the bonus indicator becomes activatable but requires intervention by a house attendant, such as a casino attendant, in order to actuate the bonus indicator. According to this embodiment of the present invention, the casino is
5 provided with greater control over the actuation of the bonus indicator and, if desired, can accompany the actuation of the bonus indicator with great fanfare. It will be appreciated that the amounts of the bonus indicated in the figure are merely for purposes of illustration and, if desired, one of
10 the amounts on the bonus indicator can have a significantly greater value. For example, one of the areas on the bonus indicator may correspond to a new automobile, a luxury vacation or a very large sum of money.

While the illustrated embodiment of the present
15 invention is generally in the form of a rotatable wheel, other visible, mechanical indicia can be provided, whether controlled totally mechanically or electro-mechanically, without departing from the scope of the present invention. For example, the bonus indicator may take the form of a
20 tumbler having a plurality of dice or a single die. According to this embodiment of the present invention when the bonus indicator is activated, the tumbler will empty the die or dice onto a clearly visible surface. According to another embodiment of the present invention, the mechanical bonus

indicator takes the form of a race wherein model animals, such as horses or dogs, traverse a mechanical race course.

As shown in the figure, in order to provide additional levels of excitement, indicia of the possible bonuses are preferably visibly displayed within the slot machine. For example, in the illustrated embodiment, a shelf is preferably displayed comprising piles of currency equal to the amounts on the bonus indicator. While actual cash is preferred, the slot machine may also be provided with fake currency or simply indicia of actual currency or the other bonus prizes.